

Story #15 (Tape
1961-1962

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Location: Abacılar
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When I Was a Lad

What you are going to hear is a genuine account of my own experiences. In fact, I do not know any tales of the kind we have been hearing here today.

When I was a lad, my father used to run a small village grocery store, and he used to send me here and there on various errands. One day he left the village on some business, and I followed him. When I started to follow him, he told me to go back and wait at home for him. But I disobeyed and followed along behind him at a distance so that he would not see me. Finally, at a town to which he was going, I caught up with my father, and he asked me, "Why did you follow me?"

Crossing through a large market place, we were separated, and I could not find my father. I looked for a long time without finding him. In the evening I found a bed for myself in an inn. The next morning I got up and began to search for him again, but there was still no trace of him.

Walking through the streets of this strange town, I saw a man with a donkey loaded with two skin bags of pekmez. When I saw this I became very hungry and felt very much like having some pekmez. One of the bags, one on the left side of the donkey, was heavier than the other, and so the load was unbalanced, and the man asked me to help him straighten the load. While helping him, I took out my ^{knife - pocket} pocket knife and made a small hole in the pekmez bag, put my mouth to the hole, and started to suck all the pekmez I could eat. After sucking enough pekmez, I called to the owner and said, "Hey, uncle, your pekmez is running out

"You son of a bitch! Don't you think I know you did it?" Saying this, he rushed over to me trying to grab me, but I was very quick to get away.

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The poor man kept cursing after me for a while.

I had run quite a way when I noticed a house with a woman standing in front. In a state of panic, I asked this woman if she would let me in as a guest. She consented, and I was glad to get into her house. I noticed that she was cooking something at the fire. She was just about to put butter from an earthen jar into the cooking pot, and she took a handful of butter from the jar. Just then she was called outside by a calf that was bellowing in the garden. While she was outside, I decided to make the dish she was cooking very tasty, and so I reached into the butter jar and grabbed a large handful of butter. It was such a large handful that I couldn't get my right hand out of the neck of the jar, and before I could get it loose, the woman returned. I pulled the whole jar under my overcoat to hide it. She put the butter in that was still in her hand and went on cooking the meal.

While eating my meal, I kept my right hand under my coat, and the woman noticed this. "Why don't you eat with your right hand, boy?"

"I have an incurable disease in that hand," I said. "That is why I don't use it to eat."

"There is a good doctor nearby. Why don't we let him treat your hand?" she said?

I said, "All right," but I had quite made up my mind to leave just as soon as I had finished my meal. When I had finished my meal, I told my hostess that I had to step outside for just a minute and then I would return. When I got outside, I saw a hoca chanting the ezan [Moslem call to worship chanted from minaret in towns where there is a minaret; at Abacilar there was none]. I swung the jar in which my hand was stuck at the hoca, and the jar landed at the feet of the surprised man. Then I ran away from the place.

Along the road, I came to the house of another woman, and I asked her to let me come in as her guest. First she said that she had no room for me and could not let me in. But I said that I did not need a room, that I would just curl up and sleep by the side of the cabinet where her bedding was stored. "Please let me come in, for I have nowhere to stay tonight." I looked so pathetic that she finally let me in.

This woman's husband was away hunting. At night, when I was sleeping by the cabinet, I heard a rapping at the door. It turned out that this was my hostess's illicit lover and now I knew why she had not wanted to let me stay in the house that night. They started making love to each other when there was suddenly another rapping at the door. My hostess told her lover, "Go over there and hide in that corner under that pile of wool." Then she went to the door and let in another of her lovers in the dark. While she was entertaining this lover, still another rapping came at the door, and there was the sound of a cough outside. "That is the cough of my husband," she said. "You go over to that corner and hide among the pieces of wood there." The husband knocked again, but she pretended that she did not recognize him and called out that it was late and she was tired. Becoming very impatient, the man jimmied the latch with his knife, and so he opened the door himself from the outside. He carried a large bunch of dead ducks and geese in his hand, and he threw these down in the dark, right beside me. The man asked his wife to make up the fire, but she pretended yet that she was still unwell. She did not want a bright fire that would light up all the room and show who was there. In the meantime, the house cat had come and had started to eat one of the ducks noisily. Afraid that the noise would bring the man back to the ducks where he might see me, I kept saying quietly "Shoo!"

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to the cat and motioning it away. Each time I said that the cat growled at me, and finally it growled so loudly that the husband discovered that the cat had stolen one of the birds. He rushed at the cat and in the dark fell over me. I got up and struck at the surprised man with my overcoat and ran out of the room and climbed up on the roof. When I did this, the other two men came out of hiding and in the dark room there began a blind fight among the three of them. The fight finally moved out of the house into the garden where the moon was shining brightly. The husband glanced up at the roof of the house and saw me there and made a ^{gesture -- threatening} threatening gesture at me. This frightened me again, and so I went over to the edge of the roof to where there was a ^{saddle -- for donkey} donkey saddle resting. I took up the saddle and aimed it at the husband when he came close to the eave and then I threw it at him with all my might. But unfortunately, I had forgotten about the girth strap, and after the saddle left my hands, this girth strap struck the back of my neck and dragged me off the roof, and the saddle and I both landed on top of the husband. It was one of the worst experiences that I had.